

Beauties of the Truth

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The Cross and Crown: William Penn, Messenger of Brotherly Love

An introduction to the life and Christian service of William Penn, a stalwart of faith in the Philadelphia period. "Being ready to faint concerning my hope of the restitution of all things, it was at this time the Lord visited me with a certain and sound testimony of his eternal world." - William Penn {1}

A seasoned man of arms learns both victory and defeat. It was defeat on every front that hung in the bitter December air for Sir William Penn. Fourteen years earlier he was a hero for a series of naval victories that included his capture of Dutch Jamaica. He contributed greatly to the advancement of British interests over Dutch interests and in the process rose to the highest levels of government. Sir William served as an Admiral of the British Navy. But in renewed warfare, a daring Dutch raid in June 1667 slipped unobserved past his coastal guard. It struck within 25 miles of London on the Medway River in Kent. During the summer of 1668 a civilian review board impeached and removed him from duty. Even before their verdict, his health began to fail. {2}

Added to these woes, the latest blow was the second arrest within thirteen months of his namesake son William, now aged 23. Once again, it was for religious activism. The warrant, dated December 16, committed him to close confinement in the Tower of London, only a few hundred paces from the Penn residence. The Bishop of London had brought charges against the young Penn for authoring a 'Blasphemous Booke lately Printed Intitulated 'The Sandy Foundation Shaken.' Most grievous to the bishop was an attack on the Trinity, asserting 'that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are not one Eternal Substance' {3} Penn further wrote, 'And if the divine nature be in three distinct so as that one is not the other, it must follow that there would be three distinct gods... For what can any man of sense conclude but that there be three distinct infinities...' Penn argued for common sense and against employing 'the terms of heathenish philosophy' in examining Trinitarian doctrine. Christ's Church should no longer be guided by such tradition into accepting 'Aquinas, the great adored St. Thomas of Rome, and one of the most renowned doctors of the Romish church, which may inform well-meaning Protestants to what refuge our adversaries run.' {4}

Young William Penn had only a few approved visitors and no exercise or fresh air. Because of his social position, he was confined in the Queen's house -- a sturdy two story stucco and beam construction facing the neatly manicured tower green with a view of the private execution block. Conditions for his printer John Derby at Gate House were far worse. {5}

YOUNG PENN'S EARLY COURSE OF LIFE

In character young William seemed much more like his mother, Margaret Jasper Vandershuren Penn, the amiable and sensible daughter of a Dutch merchant from Rotterdam. Sir William long had borne the annoyance of his son's religious zeal. First there was the adolescent skirmish with the Episcopal church stirred up by the Quaker preaching of Thomas Loe in Macroom, which 16-year-old William had attended.

Two years later, in 1662, he and several schoolmates acted on this preaching. They were expelled from the prestigious Christ Church College of Oxford for publicly criticizing the ceremonies of the Church of England. After this humiliation, the Admiral whipped, beat, turned his son out of doors, {6} and sent him to Paris to learn something of the real world.

William soon tired of Paris. In 1663 he enrolled in studies at L'Academie Protestante de Saumur, then a flourishing center of Huguenot culture, and one of Europe's leading centers for Protestant learning. It may be surprising that such a center briefly prospered in France. However, the charter for the Academy was a consequence of the liberal policies in 1598 instituted by the Protestant born and raised Henry IV. Henry desired to make amends for the horrors of his predecessor Charles IX in the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572. {7} Though for political expediency Henry abjured his Protestant upbringing for Catholicism, his clear sympathies led to continuing Jesuit inspired intrigues against him. He was assassinated in 1610.8

At Saumur, Penn lived and studied with the distinguished theologian Moise Amyraut. Amyraut struggled to reconcile the Calvinist doctrine of election with the Arminian doctrine of free grace and universal salvation. {9} His unsatisfying arguments were roundly criticized by both sides of the debate.

The words were yet sealed. Nearly two hundred years would pass. Then the recovery of the scriptural promises for both a heavenly and an earthly kingdom would provide a soul-satisfying harmony. Scriptural testimony supporting both election and free grace would stand reconciled.

CHRONOLOGY -- OUR HUGUENOT LEGACY

The air at Saumur was filled with discussion on Biblical prophecies that is surprisingly familiar. Of special interest were the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. The collective opinion held that the church was in the sixth, or Philadelphia stage. This point was not lost on Penn later in life. Huguenot scholar Pierre de Launay (1573-1661) was engaged in historical studies to determine when during the ravages of the Goths and Vandals that broke up the Roman empire one should begin counting the 1260 days of Daniel using the day-for-a-year formula. He applied the Two Witnesses to the Old and New Testaments. Amyraut took exception with some of de Launay's views, maintaining that the one thousand year reign of the church would come only after the ruin of the iron and clay in Daniel's image. {10}

However the most significant Huguenot scholar at the time would have been Pierre Jurieu (1637-1713), then a young man himself. Writing in 1686, after the Huguenot suppression and expulsion from France in 1685, Jurieu extended de Launay's methods. He concluded that the Lord's special judgment would fall on France -- the tenth part of the city -- in the decade of 1780-90, and certainly by 1796.11 These insights were repeated and incorporated by a number of later writers such as John Lathrop (1731-1820), a Yale-educated divinity scholar. He was particularly active in drawing attention to Jurieu's Chronology studies predicting the revolution in France nearly one hundred years in advance. Lathrop created a spark of interest in Biblical Chronology that William Miller (1781-1849) would fan into a full flame during his ministry.

Amyraut, at age 67, died just after New Years 1664, but Penn stayed on at Saumur a few months longer. A report to Sir William Penn in April 1664 speaks of William's 'very good character' and reported that he 'keeps pace with the best sort of company amongst whom the best things are craved.' The letter wrongly muses that little harm could come from these studies. {12}

WILLIAM PENN'S CONVERSION

After Penn's return to England later in 1664, he enrolled in the reading of law at Lincoln. Samuel Pepys, a famed observer of affairs in London, was unimpressed by 'the vanity of [Penn's] French garb and the manner of his speech and gait:' Yet a troubled poem the same year shows that beneath these appearances was a soul in turmoil. The struggles of youth and his heart sympathy for those in 'covenant' relationship to God filled his thoughts.' {3} The participation in a 'covenant by sacrifice' **Psalms 50:5** was being recovered by the Lord's people through the general re-examination of scriptures following the Reformation. Soon through the writings of William Penn, the emblem of the 'Cross and Crown' would emerge to be disseminated throughout North America and Europe.

When the hand of providence is upon one of God's servants, irony is not uncommon. In 1665, Sir William again sent his son off on travel, this time to Ireland to press the family's claims to estates that would later be the source of young Penn's great inherited wealth. While there, William tasted military action and blood when he joined a contingent that helped to quell a troop mutiny in Belfast. Flushed with excitement that fame and fortune lay through arms, he commissioned a half-portrait. This work shows a dashing youth, with dark shoulder-length hair, wearing the black armor of battle and a cravat. Only the expressive kindness in his eyes -- those mirrors of the soul -- belays the portrait's message. This painting of young William Penn in full military dress remains his only certain portrait from life.

Sir William sent him back to Cork, Ireland in 1667 to arrange for leases and rents on the family properties. In Cork, late that summer, Penn again went to the sermons of Thomas Loe, the same preacher who had incited his expulsion from Oxford. The surviving tract Thomas Loe wrote suggests the topic of his powerful discourse: 'Bear the cross, and stand faithful to God, then he will give thee an everlasting crown of glory, that shall not be taken from thee There is no other way that shall prosper than that which holy men of old have walked.' {14}

William Penn's course for life was now fixed for Christ. {15} 'Christ's Cross is Christ's way to Christ's Crown... It is a path God, in his everlasting kindness, guided my feet into in the flower of my youth, when about twenty-two years of age; He took me by the hand and led me out of the pleasures and vanities and hopes of the world... to strive against the world, the flesh, and the devil'

His father, perhaps alarmed by reports of his son's conversion to Quakerism, repeatedly ordered him directly home, and not to stop at Bristol. All to no avail. On the 3rd of November 1667, right on the stroke of the prophetic clock, young Penn was arrested for the first of many times because of his religious activity. {16} His crime was participating in a Quaker assembly on Sunday -- then heretical by law. Here Penn made his first protest for religious liberty and for the important theme of the separation of church and state. Penn's letter from jail to the Lord President of Munster, the Earl of Orrery, sets the case this way. {17}

'Though to dissent from a national system imposed by authority renders men heretics, yet I dare believe your Lordships better read in Reason and Theology than to subscribe [to] a maxim so vulgar and untrue... [as to believe] Religious Government suited to the nature and genius of a civil empire:'

The Earl sent back a fiery warning and advised young Penn that Dad, Sir William, was being sent copies of all correspondence on this matter. He added further warning against his Quaker associations. Nevertheless the charges were set aside and those jailed were released. Penn, ignoring his father's wishes, and no doubt fearful of his wrath, came home by way of Bristol so he could spend time in fellowship with George Bishop, a respected former associate of his father. This old comrade-at-arms had turned away from military service in 1654 to become a pacifist Quaker. George Bishop wrote a warm letter of commendation to Sir William on behalf of young Penn. {18}

'[I] do rejoice to see the Mercy to your family; and that the loving kindness of the Lord hath visited this thy son, to give him the true sense and conviction of that which since his childhood he hath sought to understand; to whom I hope you will be tender and receive him into your Arms and Love; [rather] than by any kind of estrangedness, put sadness on him...'

The feared 'estrangedness' took place. The father turned his son out of the house. Not surprisingly, lengthy theological treatises from young William to his father were unheeded. To add to young Penn's afflictions, death again claimed close friends and mentors as it had claimed Moise Amyraut. His dear friends Thomas Loe and George Bishop died in 1668.¹⁹ Possibly this impressed on him the brevity of our earthly course. His ministry was to be radically different from that which preceded it. Now William Penn's ministry became even more public and more controversial, leading to his treatise *The Sandy Foundation Shaken*; and then -- prison.

In correspondence related to *The Sandy Foundation Shaken* Penn engaged in sophisticated argument so he would not be dismissed as unlearned and simple-minded. But from his earliest writings Penn maintained that the Lord's word should not be understood by convoluted, academic arguments, because 'Scholars... will... mix school learning amongst your simpler and purer language, and thereby obscure the brightness of the testimony:' {2} °

He did not waiver in his position on the Trinity. Citing support from earlier scholars Paulus Samosata, Macedonius and Sabellius, he wrote later, in 1674: 'It is manifest then, though I deny the Trinity of Separate Persons in one Godhead, yet consequentially, [I] do not deny the deity of Jesus Christ'²¹

NO CROSS -- NO CROWN

The seven months in prison were spent writing *No Cross -- No Crown*, 'A discourse showing the nature and discipline of the holy Cross of Christ, and that denial of self, and daily bearing of Christ's Cross, is alone the way to rest and the Kingdom of God:' Even after three hundred years, and 53 editions, it is a moving call to a life of consecrated living. The wide distribution of this work includes editions in French, German, and Dutch. *No Cross -- No Crown* helped to fix the image of the Cross and Crown in the hearts and minds of a broad spectrum of the Lord's people. Its language is simple and sincere. Its extensive scriptural references show a thorough knowledge of scripture. It employs the question format of teaching. It asks 'What is the Cross of Christ?'

'... [It] is that divine grace and power... that constantly opposeth itself to the inordinate and fleshly appetites... and so may be justly termed the instrument of man's wholly dying to the world and being made conformable to the will of God... The way of taking up the cross is an entire resignation of soul Oh! This shows to every one's experience how hard it is to be a true disciple of Jesus. The way is narrow indeed, and the gate very strait... they that can not endure the cross must never have the crown. To reign, it is necessary first to suffer.' {22}

'What is our cup and cross that we should drink and suffer? They are the denial and offering up of ourselves, by the same spirit, to do or suffer the will of God for his service and glory, which is the true obedience of the cross of Jesus... He travelled through all the straits and difficulties of humanity first... O come! Let us follow him, the most unwearied, the most victorious captain of our salvation; to whom all the great Alexanders and mighty Caesars of the world are less than the poorest soldier of their camp could be to them... For Christ made himself of no reputation to save mankind; but these have plentifully ruined people to augment theirs... they advanced their empire by rapine and blood, but he by suffering and persuasion... Misery and slavery followed all their victories, his brought greater freedom and felicity to those he overcame. In all they did, they sought to please themselves; in all he did, he sought to please his Father, who is the King of Kings and

Lord of Lords. It is the most perfect pattern of self-denial we must follow, if we will ever come to glory' {23}

THE CHURCH -- GOD'S ETERNAL HABITATION

Penn also developed a theme neglected for nearly one thousand years by focusing on ignored scriptural promises. The tone for conventional views of heaven had been set by Catholic writers, and little modified by Protestants. An example is one of the most important writings of Western Civilization -- *The City of God* (413 AD). Here the Bishop of Hippo (St. Augustine) set forth an inspiring vision of heavenly bliss and the communion of the saints that is both powerful and lovely: {24}

'The conclusion is that in the everlasting City, there will remain in each and every one of us an inalienable freedom of will, emancipating us from every evil and filling us with every good, rejoicing in the inexhaustible beatitude of everlasting happiness, *unclouded by the memory of any sin or sanction suffered*, yet with no forgetfulness of our redemption nor of any loss of gratitude for our redeemer *The memory of previous miseries will be purely a matter of mental contemplation...* And, surely, in all that City nothing will be lovelier than that song in praise of the grace of Christ by whose blood all there were saved... the end of all our living, that Kingdom without end, the real goal of our present life.'

In focusing on the inspiring promises of scripture St. Augustine minimized the importance of the life experiences of the church -- these are memories dissipated like clouds. But Penn recognized that these life experiences acquired under unfavorable conditions will eternally benefit the church. {25}

'For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said... **{2 Corinthians 6:16}** This is the evangelical temple, the Christian church whose ornaments are not... worldly art and wealth, but the graces of the spirit: meekness, love, faith, patience, self-denial and charity... This living house is more glorious than Solomon's dead house; and of which he was but a figure, as he, the builder, was of Christ, who builds up a holy temple to God... But the divine glory, the beauty of holiness in the gospel house or church, made up of renewed believers, should exceed the outward glory of Solomon's temple..'

This focus on the church as God's glorious eternal habitation was really ground breaking. In contrast to St. Augustine, the church does not merely deaden the memories of their sufferings and join the heavenly realm in rest, love and praise -- their sufferings, bearing the cross, and their graces of the spirit, constitute *them* as the holy temple to God.

VICTORY THROUGH PATIENCE AND LONG-SUFFERING

After being released from the Tower July 1669, Penn again took up his evangelical travels. In an extended trip to Ireland in September he combined business and evangelical work. He established active contacts with Quakers throughout the British isles and was again arrested for preaching in August 1670. Civil disobedience was now a way of life. His father's health weakened further and Penn agreed to let his father pay his fine so that he could leave Newgate prison in October 1670, one month before his father's death. As the shadow of death deepened, Sir William was reconciled to his son. {26}

'... notwithstanding all my trials... the Lord had preserved me to this day... [and a particular blessing was] the tenderness of Father to me before and at his death; and how through patience and long-suffering all opposition was conquered.'

PENN'S EARLY MINISTRY AND OUR LEGACY

Had the ministry of young William Penn ended at this point, his life would have been memorable for focusing the minds and hearts of Christians on the Cross and Crown emblem. We would hear echoes of his theme of simplicity in the words 'simple and sincere toward all:' We would note with interest his ministry immediately following his father's death when he made two missionary circuits in Holland and Germany -- trips undertaken at risk, since Penn was the son of one of Holland's principal adversaries. He maintained correspondence with persecuted Quakers in Danzig, and sent a special letter of petition for their relief to John III Sobieski, the elected King of Poland. {27}

The death of Sir William left young Penn in control of the family fortune. This was not of immediate concern to him except that it gave him the opportunity to pursue the ministry nearly full time. There is no indication whatsoever in his writings that he had formed the idea for the 'holy experiment.'

Yet, this is the same William Penn familiar to United States citizens as one of their greatest colonial founders. A man who would make a Christian attempt in this imperfect world to establish a representative democracy committed to liberty, civil rights, religious freedom, a life of decent living under a government at peace with its neighbors. The only colonial founder who established an effective peace with the native American Indians that would last for three generations. This founder of Pennsylvania -- so named at the insistence of the British government to honor Sir William -- lived as a traveling evangelist. Penn, who Voltaire would later call one of the greatest lawgivers since antiquity -- at this point spoke only in opposition to the repressive laws crafted to chain men's consciences. In time, Pennsylvania would prove to be the focal point for the struggle for freedom, of historic importance to men everywhere. Philadelphia, the very city founded by Penn, would prove to be its cradle. But these efforts of 'little strength' {**Revelation 3:8**} were yet in the future.

-- {Richard Doctor}

{1} *Dunn, Mary Maples and Richard Dunn*, *The Papers of William Penn*; Record #119, p. 477, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981. This definitive series, now up to Volume 5, is a well supported scholarly effort to publish and exhaustively annotate all the records relating to William Penn. It is arranged chronologically so that all references to Penn's writings may be conveniently recovered by turning to the appropriate data. Penn here understands restitution to be an inner spiritual condition, but his solid links to chronological study will be treated below.

{2} *McClintock, John and James Strong*, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Penn, William, Baker, 1981.

{3} *Dunn*, *op. cit.*, Record #25. Though the words are Penn's, all quotes are rendered with modern American English spelling. Penn's spelling on the whole is atrocious.

{4} *Dunn*, *op. cit.*, Record #26.

{5} *Dunn*, *op. cit.*, p. 81. Most recently this same house hosted Hermann Goering during WWII.

{6} *Comfort, W*, *William Penn and Our Liberties*, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1975, P. 57; also in *Dunn*, *op. cit.*, Record #119, p. 476.

{7} *Russell, C.T.*, *Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume 2, p. 338.

{8} *McClintock and Strong*, op. cit., Huguenots.

{9} *McClintock and Strong*, op. cit., Amyraut.

{10} *Froom, L.E.*, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Volume 2, Review and Herald, Washington, DC, 1948, pp. 632-633.

{11} *Froom*, op. cit., pp. 226, 234.

{12} *Dunn*, op. cit., Record #3.

{13} *Dunn*, op. cit., Record #4.

{14} *No Cross -- No Crown*, p. x.

{15} *Penn, W.*, *No Cross -- No Crown*, 1682, reprinted by Sessions, York, England, 1981, p. xxx.

{16} *the five months of torment **Revelation 9:5** begins with the bold posting of the ninety-five thesis by Martin Luther on October 31, 1517, then $5 \times 30 = 150$ prophetic days or 150 years, end October 31, 1667. This would be the first Sunday following the end of that period of savage bloodshed and misery and the beginning of a new era of religious liberty.*

{17} *Dunn*, op. cit., Record #18. Note that Religious Government is capitalized while civil empire is not, and also the diplomatic use of 'Lordships' in the plural of the 'royal wa'

{18} *Dunn*, op. cit., Record #20.

{19} *NCNC*, pp. 30-34.

{20} *Dunn*, op. cit., Record #119, p. 478.

{21} *Dunn*, op. cit., Record #76, p. 271.

{22} *NCNC*, Pp. 37-38.

{23} *Walsh, C. G., et al. translators*, *St. Augustine -- City of God*, Book XXII, Chapter 30, Doubleday Image Books, 1958.

{24} *NCNC*, pp. 58-59.

{25} *Dunn*, op. cit., Record #119, p. 435.

{26} *Dunn*, op. cit., Record #119, p. 477

Spirit Begetting in the Churches Today

The beginning of the third millennium and continued extension of the Harvest Period seems a most appropriate time to review the question of whether spirit begetting can occur in the nominal churches. We would like to investigate this subject from two standpoints: first, by direct sanctified reasoning based on the Scriptures and analysis of current conditions; and second, by examining the statements of Pastor Russell bearing on this matter. {1}

WHAT IS MEANT BY SPIRIT BEGETTAL?

We might first inquire, what is spirit begetting and what is required for such to take place in the life of the individual believer? Spirit begetting is the reception of the Spirit of God that transforms the old, human nature into an embryo 'new creature' in Christ. The old human hopes and ambitions pass away, and are replaced by higher aims and desires, centered in Christ and things pertaining to God. { **2 Corinthians 5:17, Ro 8:10-11** }

Those who are spirit begotten actually have a measure of the spirit and mind of the Heavenly Father. They are energized in spiritual activities involved in carrying out God's will in their lives and setting priorities that put the Kingdom of God, His righteousness and Christian ideals first. They are being continuously transformed into the image and likeness of Christ and just as continuously are putting down the old human nature with its selfish, worldly and sinful propensities. They have a new mind that takes charge of the old body and quickens it in the service of the Lord, the truth and the brethren.

The begetting of the Spirit, then, is that which begins the new spiritual life, opening the pathway to sanctification and the good works that identify a true Christian, and, if carried out faithfully, will lead to glorification and birth on the Spirit plane. But what is it that causes spirit begetting to occur in the first place? What are the conditions necessary for this to take place and produce such a clear-cut change in the life of the believer?

WHEN DOES SPIRIT BEGETTAL BEGIN?

The Pastor consistently set forth the belief, amply borne out in Scripture, that two vital requirements must be met before spirit begetting can take place. These are clearly outlined in Volume Six of *Studies in the Scriptures* (page 327) and enumerated elsewhere such as R5246, 'Broad Unsectarian Questions:' The first condition -- sometimes separated into two -- is that the individual drawing nigh to God repent of sin and fully trust in the merit of Christ's sacrifice on his behalf. The second, that he make a full and unreserved consecration of himself to God, renouncing his own will and dedicating himself completely to the Lord's service. If these basic requirements are met, and God accepts him, spirit begetting will follow and the individual is privileged to symbolize his true baptism into Christ by water immersion. This will be the experience of every believer, regardless of his denominational standing or lack of it, and dependent solely on his meeting these basic Bible requirements. { **Acts 2:38, Acts 8:36-38, Acts 16:30-31, Romans 12:1-2** }

Spirit begetting as thus described is merely the beginning of the believer's life as a New Creature in Christ. Such an individual has made a good start and may be likened to a babe in Christ. Henceforth, to grow as a Christian he will need to feed upon the spiritual truths contained in the Word of God, likened both to the 'milk of the Word' { **1 Peter 2:2** } and 'strong meat' that belongs to them who are mature and 'of full age' in the faith. { **Hebrews 5:12-14** } However, since spirit begetting occurs at the very start of the new life in Christ, it does not require the advanced knowledge or appreciation of deeper doctrines that more mature Christians are expected to possess. (See R4900.)

KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST ESSENTIAL

In considering the possibility of spirit begetting occurring in the denominational churches today, we need a rudimentary awareness of the degrees of spirituality that may be found there. In that large segment of the Christian world where liberal sentiments prevail and where modernist beliefs have rejected or overridden the Bible, it is hardly to be expected that spirit begetting could take place. But in those churches where the Bible is accepted as the inerrant Word of God and Christ is enthusiastically preached, as is still occurring in most 'fundamentalist' and evangelical groups, it surely would seem to remain a possibility. 'The Word of God is quick and powerful... and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart'. {**Hebrews 4:12**} Wherever the Scriptures are cherished and preached, the Word of the Lord is capable of reaching the heart of the hearer and urging such to follow on to know the Lord. Though the message goes largely unheeded and the masses of nominal believers everywhere remain unconverted in the scriptural sense, we continue to believe the possibility for such remains an option.

Christians today freely admit that there is a wide range of spirituality and personal commitment among individuals in the various denominations. Those whose beliefs have been quickened above mere religious sentiments and have been willing to publicly confess their faith in Christ as redeemer are commonly referred to as 'born-again' Christians. But even this term has evolved in modern fashion to cover a large body of nominal believers, of whom it is doubtful that more than a very few have come to know the Lord in an intimate way.

Late in his ministry (1914), Pastor Russell estimated that there might have been one million of the 'Great Company' class who lived during the Gospel Age and that a considerable number of such consecrated believers yet remained 'in Babylon' -- in the confused mix of Christendom. (See R5411.) If we equate the majority of those spirit begotten in Christendom with the 'Great Company' class, as seems implied by the Pastor, then his estimates of numbers compares very favorably with a very recent study put out on the 'Status of Global Evangelization' (1996) by a very conservative Christian group. {2} It divided the Christian world into three major segments: a a large group that may have heard the Gospel preached to some slight extent, but not with sufficient relevance to make a positive decision for Christ 1.5 billion, b another group that heard the Gospel message clearly but failed to respond 1.1 billion, and c a tiny segment that had actually made a personal commitment of faith in Christ 3 million -- a surprisingly small number.

We would restrict the possibility of spirit begetting to this minority segment and probably to but a portion of these. Thus, when we speak of the possibility of spirit begetting in the churches today, we are confining ourselves to a relative handful within these groups, whether Catholic or Protestant, and, of course, are excluding non-Christians altogether.

OTHER EVIDENCES

In addition to the two basic requirements for spirit begetting as reflected in the immersion service questions, are there other evidences to demonstrate that such has occurred in the life of the believer? Regardless of whether the individual happens to be a member of a church or not, are there additional criteria that might be used in evaluating whether someone has begun a new life in Christ? We think there are.

Bible Students, though not a part of the organized religious systems all about them, do have some contact with family, friends, coworkers or acquaintances who are such members. It may not be a rare occurrence to find some among these who exhibit a strong love for the Lord Jesus and a faith firmly rooted in the Bible as the Word of God. These demonstrate many of the fruits and graces of the Spirit that we ourselves seek to develop, and show a disposition to wait upon the Lord and to seek His will in prayer. They believe they are in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, are claiming God's promises and are seeking to grow in the knowledge of God. They also are struggling to put down the selfish and sinful tendencies of the flesh in

favor of living a holy life to glorify God. They are often called upon to stand for their beliefs and, in school, at work, or wherever, may have to suffer the consequences of social ostracism and prejudice. In not a few foreign lands today, some of these faithful Christians are being severely persecuted for confessing their faith to others, even to the point of torture and loss of life itself.

We submit that such characteristics may be evidences of spirit begetting in the lives of these believers and hold great potential for being rewarded on the spirit plane of life. Such dedication and devotion to God do not seem that much different from our own, even though they may lack the deeper appreciation of certain truths that have been revealed to us in our wider understanding of the Divine Plan of the Ages. Sometimes we are amazed at the amount of fruitage these believers develop with the lesser degree of truth to which they have been exposed. It also raises the question whether we as Bible Students, individually and collectively, have been faithful in our witness, in sharing the precious truths we hold so dear.

In the final analysis, we will be abundantly satisfied with how the Lord views the matter and how He determines to reward 'them that diligently seek Him:' and show a willingness to conform their lives to His will. {**Hebrews 11:6, Romans 12:2**}

WHAT DID THE PASTOR TEACH?

Pastor Russell made several direct statements in the Towers about spirit begetting in the churches and pointed out how this actually had a strong bearing on his own ministry. Let us take a closer look at some of his clearest expressions in this regard. All of those cited were made late in his ministry.

In the February 1, 1911 journal, the Pastor addressed issues of Christian unity and the identity of the true church. He expressed the thought that the spirit begotten in the various churches at that time would be only a small minority of the total membership.

0. 'We perceive that the great masses, Catholic and Protestant, are not, and never were, the church of Christ; they deceive themselves. They have been children of this world, not spirit-begotten new creatures in Christ; they have not been living stones in the temple, not branches of the true Vine, not members of the 'little flock: They have been worldly people with religious sentiments... who misunderstand that great teaching of the Bible -- that only the sanctified are in Christ Jesus, called to be saints' (R4754).

Nonetheless, he was very clear in stating that there were *some* of the true 'wheat' in the various churches, as noted in the same article:

"Every one who turns his back upon sin; who accepts of Jesus as his Redeemer and Savior, and who approaches the Father in full consecration through Jesus, and who receives the begetting of the holy Spirit of God -- all such are brethren of Jesus and sons of God, whether they join the Roman Catholic, the Congregational, the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian or other human systems' Such a reformed, consecrated believer is equally a child of God in whatever denomination he may be, or if he be outside of all denominational walls or creeds.... The various creeds of Christendom have been so many stumbling blocks and hindrances to honest souls who sought their God and the light of his Word. True, they may have assisted in some particulars, as well as they may have done injury in other respects . . . The Scriptures declare that the Lord knoweth them that are his!... So then, without attempting a personal identification of the branches of the Vine, we may surely know that they are very few. . . The nominal membership of the various sects contain comparatively few of these saintly ones, who alone have divine recognition as being 'the church of the first-borns whose names are written in heaven' -- fruit-bearing branches in the true Vine, living stones in the temple of God imbued with the holy Spirit, active members in the Spirit-begotten body of Christ" (R4754).

In the March 15, 1915 *Watch Tower*, a direct question was posed about the possibility of spirit begotten ones existing outside of the Bible Student fellowship. 'Is there any one at the present time outside of present truth who has the holy Spirit?'

"There are various degrees of the Spirit of holiness which may be possessed by the child of God at various times... We are not to think that all who are begotten of the holy Spirit are exactly on the same plane, in either their spiritual appetites or their development or their knowledge of God's plan we were children of God before we received full knowledge, so we believe it is possible for others to be children of God without having the full knowledge... *So we have reason to believe that the numbers of God's people begotten of the holy Spirit and still in Babylon are considerable...* [emphasis ours]. The Bible speaks of the great company class as the 'great multitude: as though the foolish virgin class were larger than the wise virgin class. And the Scriptures indicate that the great company class will not all have fled from Babylon before its [final] overthrow. 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues:... Some will come out, and others will not.... These foolish virgins will see that their lack of love and zeal has lost them a place in the bride class. But they are virgins, nevertheless, and will have a place, or portion, as the companions of the bride...' (R5656, 'Many Christians Not Yet Enlightened')

Here the Pastor is referring to spirit begotten ones in the denominations as members of the 'Great Company' class and describes them as 'considerable' in number. A thoughtful follow-through of the Pastor's remarks provides yet further enlightenment. If the assumption is correct that some of the spirit begotten ones will remain within the nominal systems until the promised overthrow, and if that final destruction is yet future (as Bro. Russell said it was at the time of his writing), then another fact becomes clear:

Spirit begettal must have been an ongoing occurrence within the churches throughout the Harvest Period, since most of those referred to by the Pastor in his day would have passed on long before now and as a class would have been replaced.

A final quotation is taken from the June 15, 1914 article, 'The Voice From Heaven:' Again the Pastor cited conditions then prevalent regarding the distribution of God's people in the churches and emphasized his efforts to reach them. He wrote:

'As the people of natural Israel were led captive into literal Babylon, so the people of spiritual Israel, among whom were some of the Lord's true saints, were led captive into Mystic Babylon Looking out upon the so-called Christian world today, we see that there could not be a better word used to picture existing conditions than the word confusion. *Yet there are true people of God still in this Babylonian system* [emphasis ours]. But the time of separation is here ...

'It is because we believe that there are children of God attempting to live on the husks and skimmed milk of human tradition -- brethren in Christ starving for the pure food offered in the Word of God -- that we are trying to reach and help them... Some [held captive in the systems] are hearing now about the sins of Babylon -- that these sins are about to be punished, and that they should come out and be on God's side, if they would have divine favor. It is the desire to further sound out this present message that has led us to the production of the Photo-Drama of Creation -- that those who would not read might see. To whatever extent it helps each of God's children, still bound, to recognize his own responsibility, it represents the voice of God, telling them their present duty as Christians:' (R5478-5479) (See also D267-8, T572.)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Spirit begettal, in our view, remains a strong possibility in or out of the churches today, despite widespread religious apathy and alarming encroachments of modernist beliefs that deny man's very need of a Redeemer. God is still calling His own, His Word of truth still sanctifies the believers, and His influence continues to

beckon such to a closer walk with Him. Hence, wherever the Bible is cherished and Christ is preached, the desire for full consecration may be impressed on the heart of the believer. Scripturally, this leads to spirit begettal as a babe in Christ and is followed by evidences of spirituality and a life directed by the Lord. Such individuals are probably few in number compared to the masses of nominal Christians and some, not heeding the call to come out, may remain captives in denominational churches until the final destruction of these systems.

-- *Charles Redeker*

{1} Though this article fairly represents Brother Russell's view, some brethren do not understand spirit begettal in the systems to be the case today. -- Editor

{2} Mapping International; data base utilized by the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Report.

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Editor's Note on The Virgin Birth

The article "The Virgin Birth" (previous issue) drew a number of comments. To address a concern about Mary contributing faulty genetic material, the article suggested both sperm and egg were from heaven, transplanted together into Mary's womb. However others observed that dominant genes from one parent can supersede recessive genes from another, and suppose by some such means Mary might have supplied the egg without tainting the transferred life, giving greater force to the selection of Mary's genealogy. In any case the matter was a miracle, and Jesus was born wholly human.